

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS  
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION  
Elk 2025**

**HD540 add National Forest lands restriction to late season General Elk License**

**Hunting Districts: 540**

**1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).**

Currently in Hunting District 540 on the General Elk License, the Antlerless Elk Late Season restriction says "Not valid on FWP WMAs." This language should have the same restriction wording as the 005-00 Elk B License, Late Season restriction that says "Not valid on National Forest lands or FWP WMAs." The restriction on National Forest lands and FWP WMAs has been in place on various elk licenses that have been valid in hunting district 540 since the 2016 season when late antlerless elk hunting was first available.

**2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.**

The objective of this proposed change is to have consistent wording on the two elk licenses valid in Hunting District 540 during the Late Season to decrease confusion about what licenses are valid and where in the district they are valid.

**3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.**

The success of this proposal will be measured in the 2025 elk regulations if the General Elk License and the 005-00 Elk B License have the same restriction language during the Late Season dates for Antlerless Elk.

**4. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).**

The population objective for this district is a three-year average of 1,500-2,000 total elk. The second population objective is a three-year average bull:cow ratio of 10:100 or greater, among the total elk observed during winter surveys. The current three-year average is 1,526 total elk, and the three-year average ratio is 21 bulls:100 cows.

The elk population in Hunting District 540 has a decreasing total trend count in the winter surveys, and the three year average total elk count is approaching the lower end of the objective range therefore it makes sense to decrease some of the hunting opportunity. Following the 2025 winter survey a more restrictive recommendation may be needed as part of the 2025 biennial season setting process.

**5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).**

Depending on the weather and snow levels, hunters can have good access to the National Forest lands in Hunting District 540 which can increase harvest in mild winters and decrease harvest opportunities in deep snow years in the winter. The need for late season antlerless opportunity is more focused on private lands in this district and not on the National Forest lands or FWP WMAs in this district.

**6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).**

Several hunters at the 2023 hunter check station in Lavina asked about the discrepancy between the General Elk License and the 005-00 Elk B License Late Season opportunities and restrictions. Comments were mixed about whether it was a good thing or not to have antlerless elk hunting on the National Forest land during the late season. All agreed it was confusing and both licenses should be consistent in where they are valid during the Late Season.

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